

Hoge, Peyton Harrison.

Officers of a Presbyterian Congregation.

Div. S.
252.05
H7150

DUKE
UNIVERSITY



DIVINITY SCHOOL
LIBRARY



*George Washington Flowers
Memorial Collection*

DUKE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

ESTABLISHED BY THE
FAMILY OF
COLONEL FLOWERS

R. W. Price.

July 2nd / 86.

THE OFFICERS

—OF A—

PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION.

THREE SERMONS PREACHED IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF WILMINGTON, N. C.,

BY REV. PEYTON H. HOGE.



63K

THE OFFICERS

)

—OF A—

PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION.

THREE SERMONS PREACHED IN THE FIRST PRESBY-
TERIAN CHURCH OF WILMINGTON, N. C.,

BY REV. DEYTON H. HOGE.

“If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget
her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue
cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem
above my chief joy.”--Ps. 137:55.

“For her my tears shall fall;
For her my prayers ascend;
To her my cares and toils be given,
Till toils and cares shall end.”—DWIGHT.

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2014

DIV. S.
252.05
H 7150

THE MINISTER OF THE WORD.

PREACHED ON ENTERING UPON THE PASTORAL CARE OF
THE CHURCH, DECEMBER 6TH, 1885.

Col. 1: 28.—Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

In formally beginning my pastoral labors among you, it seems proper that I should set forth the views that I take of my responsibilities, and the principles that will govern my actions; in order that there may be complete understanding between us when we take upon us our mutual vows. To this end let us go to the word of God, and learn from the lips of the inspired apostle what are the duties of that ministry in which he gloried.

In setting forth the work of the preacher of the gospel, the text naturally falls into three divisions. It tells us what we are to preach, the aim and end of preaching, and the method of preaching.

No one need ask to whom the introductory word of the text refers. It can refer to but One. We are

to preach Christ. The words that precede are, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

"Whom we preach." As I stand here upon the threshold of my ministry among you, one thing I wish distinctly understood—I will preach Christ. No one who hears me, no matter how disposed to criticise, no matter how inclined to differ from me in my views of truth, shall be able to deny that I preach Christ. He shall be the central sun, He the all-embracing theme of all my preaching, in the future as in the past. To exalt Him, to magnify His work, to set forth His glory shall be my supreme desire.

In His *person* I will preach Him as the God-man, perfect God and perfect man. As God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father; the Creator of all things, Himself uncreated; from whom are all things, unto whom are all things, and who is over all, God blessed forever. As a man, born like other men, capable of growth and development like other men, and endowed with human soul and human faculties; with human sympathies and human heart. I will not preach a monster-man, a man merely endowed with a super-human nature, and super human power, that put Him above human wants and above human sympathies. I will preach Him as the *perfect human expression of the Divine*. I have formed my views of His person from such texts as these; "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our

hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;" or the wonderful expression from the chapter from which the text was taken, "The image of the invisible God;" or that other from the epistle to the Hebrews, "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person." Thus, is He the perfect revelation of God to man. For this he must be perfect God, or how could He perfectly reveal God? For this He must be a perfect man, or how could He perfectly reveal God to man? But as God in man, in every act of His life, in every word that He spoke, in every line and feature of His character, He sets forth the wisdom, and power, and glory, and love of God, that we may know Him, not as a God afar off, dwelling in light inaccessible which no man can approach unto, but as God manifest in the flesh, as God with human heart, our Brother and our Friend.

In His *work*, I will preach Him as God's sacrifice for sin, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,—the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world: ordained of God from all eternity to make expiation for the sins of the world, by doing all that the law required of man, and bearing all that the law laid upon guilty man, and so reconciling the world unto Himself. I will preach Christ in the fullness of time voluntarily coming to fulfil this work, emptying Himself of the glory of His Godhood, taking

the form of a servant—the author and source of law coming as a servant under law; allying Himself with a nature that had sinned, and so appearing before the law as an offender against law; taking into His person a nature that could suffer, that He might bear the penalties of a broken law; and all that God might be just and the justifier of all that come unto God by Him.

And I will preach Him as risen from the dead, having burst the bars of death, since it was not possible that He could not be holden of it. I will preach Him as ascended to the right hand of the Father, God thus declaring that the law is satisfied, that complete expiation has been made. And there, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, all power is given to Him in heaven and in earth, that He may guide and control all things for the good of His church. I will preach Him as the source of all power, the source of all light, the source of all love, the source of all life; sending forth His Spirit unto the world to subdue all things to Himself.

So I preach. But the truth of Jesus as I preach it will come out more fully when we consider the *end* for which I shall preach.

“That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” It is often thought that the chief work of a minister is the conversion of souls; but the conver-

sion of a soul is only a work begun. It bears the same relation to the perfected work that the foundation of a building bears to the completed structure. The great work set before us is to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I shall labor. And with this end in view I shall, first of all, preach a salvation that consists in perfection in Christ Jesus. The salvation that I shall preach is no mere immunity from suffering; no mere enjoyment of physical delights, or such delights as in a higher state of existence correspond to physical delights in this. I shall preach a salvation of *holiness*, a salvation that consists in the enjoyment of the Divine perfections, a partaking of the Divine nature, a reflecting of the Divine likeness; a salvation that begins in this life, with the first aspirations after holiness, and that is only perfected with the perfection of holiness in the life to come. To bring you into such a state of salvation Christ died; to bring you into such a state of salvation I shall preach.

But as the foundation must be laid before the structure can be reared, as life must be imparted before it can be developed and matured, I shall labor for the conversion of souls. To this end I will preach peace and pardon and reconciliation through the blood of the cross; I will preach of a law fully satisfied, of a ransom fully paid; I will preach the sufficient merit of an Almighty Saviour; I will preach re-

demption perfect and complete, so that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, so that all who accept Him and His work are justified by faith and have peace with God.

And I will preach him as a Saviour gracious and kind, the friend of sinners: standing and calling, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; and confirming his invitation with the assurance, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."

I will set Him forth before you as sufficient for all the needs of your soul, in whom are given unto us, all things that pertain unto life and godliness. I will preach Him as in Himself beautiful, and glorious, the one altogether lovely; worthy of the highest homage and devotion and adoration of your souls; that His beauty and glory may draw you unto Him.

I will preach Him above all things upon the cross—set forth evidently before your eyes as crucified for the sins of the world, that the spectacle of His bleeding, dying love might melt your heart, and bow your will at His feet. But at the same time I will preach what He Himself preached, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

To those of you who know Him not I will preach your inability to apprehend heavenly things, your deadness to all spiritual affections, your blindness to the glory of God as revealed in the life and charac-

ter and death of Christ,—not that there is any physical inability on your part, not that you lack any of the faculties necessary to receive the truth—but only the inability of a will enslaved by sin, the deadness of a heart fixed on this world, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

But I will preach your helplessness, only that I may point you to the help that is in Jesus. For He ever stands waiting to give you His spirit, ready to give Him to all who ask, more ready to give than you are to ask, more ready to give than you are to receive, yearning over you, and ever knocking at the door of your heart that He may come in and dwell with you, quicken you, and unite you to Himself.

But as I have said, the minister's great work is with the living, not the dead. It is not his to impart the germ of Divine life within the soul; his task is to nurture and foster the living germ until it come to maturity. The ministry was given by Christ for the perfection of the saints; for the edifying—the building up of the body of Christ, until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man; and the measure of that perfection is no less a standard than the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

To that end I shall preach the holiness of Christ,

as revealed in His life and character, as the pattern and model for our imitation. But that life and character is not merely a model for our imitation, but a pattern to which we are to be conformed; not merely a memory, but a hope; and a hope not merely attainable, but to be attained. For we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And stimulated by this inspiring hope, every man that hath it in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure. Since this is the salvation for which we wait, this the consummation of all our hopes, we can never rest content with any attainments in holiness short of His stature, can never be satisfied till we awake with His likeness.

I will preach the *word* of Christ as the source of all our wisdom, the light to guide us through all the darkness and dangers of this present time into that path of the just which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. And while never man spake like this man, I need not remind you that His word is not merely that which He spoke on earth, but that all the scriptures are His word, breathed into His Prophets and Apostles by His Holy Spirit, and by Him to guide them into all truth. I will preach this word, and will endeavor to send you to it ever for help and guidance, that with the word of Christ dwelling in you richly, you may be made wise unto salvation, and sanctified through His truth.

I will preach the *will* of Christ as the sole rule of all our actions; that when we take Him as Redeemer we must take Him as Sovereign and Lord; so that when by His word or His providence, His will is ascertained, he who has committed his way unto the Lord, has no further choice, no question of human wisdom or expediency to solve, but simply to obey His will, at whatever cost, at whatever sacrifice, casting all his care upon Him who careth for him.

I will preach the *glory* of Christ as the supreme end of the Christian in all that he does; that the Christian is one who has *denied himself* as the end and aim of his actions, that taking up his cross, he may follow Christ. Christ's glory, Christ's honour, Christ's exaltation must ever be his supreme end in all that he does. The Christian life is a life of consecration, in which we present ourselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service; even as Christ pleased not Himself, but though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.

And I will preach the *love* of Christ as the constraining power, by which self and selfishness are crucified within us, and we find necessity laid upon us to imitate His example, to walk by His words, to obey His will, to seek His glory, and sacrifice all things to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

But in addition to these provisions for our sanctification growing out of the very relations we bear to Christ, I will preach Christ as personally superintending the work of sanctification in our souls. I will preach Him as our *intercessor*, standing at the right hand of God, and looking down into our hearts, and seeing every need and want of our souls, whether growing out of our natural dispositions or the circumstances that surround us; and, as He listens to our feeble prayers, interpreting them into our real wants, and authoritatively asking for us that which we need, on the ground of His own sufferings and merit.

And that which He obtains for us He Himself administers for our good. I will preach Him as Head over all things for His church, as ordering everything by His providence, that just those conditions shall be thrown around us which are best for the development and perfection of our spiritual life; sending just those joys and sorrows, just those modes of life, just those surroundings and associations, just those trials and temptations, just those crises, just those mercies, that will impress upon us those lessons of His holy word, that we need to learn before we are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

But above all will I preach Him as sending into our hearts His Holy Spirit, and so sanctifying to us His word and providence; so communicating unto us more and more of His own life, that we may be renewed

in the whole man after the image of God, and enabled more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness; that we may daily cast off more and more the image of the old Adam, and be conformed to the image of Christ; that by His life, growing up and developing within us, we may come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

So will I preach Christ that I may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

But we must further notice the *method* of preaching that the text reveals; "warning every man, and teaching every man with all wisdom " I will speak of the last first. In that setting forth of the truths of Christ which I have promised, teaching is to a certain extent implied. But teaching implies more than the mere proclamation of the truth; it implies line upon line, precept upon precept; it implies such a method of preaching the truth that it shall not merely entertain, astonish, or excite admiration, but that it shall *instruct*. To teach with all wisdom! He that would fulfil that duty, must first obtain that wisdom. But this wisdom is not the wisdom of the earth, but wisdom that cometh down from above. Accordingly I regard it as one of the most important parts of the duty I owe to you to seek to know what is the mind of the Spirit in His written word. With what knowledge I possess or may acquire of the original languages,

with what help I can obtain from the researches of the learned and the meditations of the devout. I will endeavor to study God's word that I may teach it unto you. But chiefly do I expect to study it in the pages of our English Bible, comparing Scripture with Scripture, that I may have God's light upon His own word; ever seeking the help and guidance of His Spirit, that mind and heart may be freed from all prejudice, and prepared for the reception of the truth, and that He Himself may guide me into all truth. And after I have thus sought to ascertain the truth, I will never put discredit upon God's word by preaching from it in any other sense than what seems to me to be its true meaning.

Since then it is my business to teach, I will not be ashamed to preach often upon the great *doctrines* of Christianity, believing that God has revealed nothing in His word that is not profitable for us to know; believing that if Christ prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth," the knowledge of the truth must be necessary to our sanctification; believing that these doctrines themselves are the great facts concerning God, concerning man, concerning sin, concerning retribution, concerning redemption and eternal life, upon which all our actions are based, and upon which all our destinies depend. Consequently I will preach often upon those cardinal texts that set forth the great fundamental truths of our religion.

Believing, too, that all error is of Satan, as all truth is of God, and that all error is injurious to the spiritual life of God's people, as all truth is profitable, I will feel it my duty to defend the truth against all error from within or from without the church, whenever I think that such error is likely to reach your knowledge and so affect your spiritual life; remembering the command laid upon me to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. I will further endeavor to clear the truth from those difficulties which beset it in the minds of all; difficulties that are often felt most keenly by the most conscientious and devout seekers after truth. Wherever such difficulties can be removed by a rational explanation, I will endeavor to give it, as plainly and simply as I can. But wherever they grow out of the limitations of our own understanding, and the unfathomable nature of the truths themselves, I will seek not to darken counsel by words without knowledge, but simply to impress that fact upon you, at the time reminding you of the many truths, not of revelation, but of nature, that we daily accept under the same limitations.

I will further seek with whatever abilities I possess, to make the truth *beautiful* and *glorious* in your eyes, or rather to let its own beauty shine forth, that it may win its way by its own power, and draw your hearts by its own attraction. I will endeavor to make it *precious* in your sight, by preaching it to the heart,

as the one thing needful to comfort and bless our lives, and cheer our hearts with the hopes of eternity.

And I will try to preach *scripturally*. I will preach doctrine, but I will endeavor not to preach it theologically. Theology is the scientific arrangement of doctrine, and is necessary for the thorough equipment of the teacher of truth. But to the people he is to teach truth not scientifically, but practically, which is scripturally; for the Scriptures give truth in its natural and practical, rather than its scientific relations. And he who would reach with the truth the practical lives of those to whom he preaches, must present it in those relations, and in those proportions in which the Scriptures present it.

To accomplish this it is my custom to seek as wide a range of texts as possible, and I recently had occasion to notice that during my past ministry I had preached from every book in the New Testament except the third epistle of John, which contains but fourteen verses. In the Old Testament I have not preached from such a large proportion of the whole, but I have preached from many of the books in all its great divisions. I will preach on precepts and promises, on proverb and psalm, on history and biography. Sometimes I may preach upon a single pregnant clause; sometimes I may turn over the leaves of God's word with you, that we may gain its whole teaching upon some one point; and again, I will

open before you some extended passage of Scripture. In this way, I hope to go over in course with you some whole books of God's word, as in my past ministry, I have gone over the whole of the epistle to the Ephesians, and the greater part of the life of our Lord.

In addition to my public instruction, I will endeavor, according to the Apostle's example, to teach also from house to house. The exigencies of city life do not indeed permit that gathering together of families for pastoral instruction that is possible in other fields, and the facilities for attendance upon public worship seem to render it less necessary. But as I shall have opportunity I will endeavor to turn everything to account for your spiritual instruction, using your trials, cares, temptations, and afflictions as opportunities for impressing upon you the appropriate truth from God's word. And I will make it my business as I see your children reaching the age of discretion, or manifesting serious interest in religious things, to seek them out and instruct them thoroughly in the way of salvation, in the duties of the Christian life, and the significance of the Lord's Supper. And in my past experience it has gladdened my heart to see how readily under such teachings the children of God's people have in most cases yielded their hearts to obedience of the truth.

And to this I add with deep humility that it shall be my endeavor to illustrate the truths of the gospel

in my walk and conversation among you. No one but my God knows so well as I the evils of my own heart; no one else can realize so well as I how far my practice falls short of the standard set before me. But my strength is in the Lord, and trusting in his promises, I can hope to make higher attainments in holiness, to deal more faithfully with my own heart, and to approximate more nearly His standard. By His grace I trust that I shall at least be kept from any open transgressions that would discredit the truth that I proclaim, offend one of the least of God's children, or cast a stumbling block in the way of any sinner. In the fear of God I will endeavor to discharge my duties to you and all men, to conform my life to His commands, and to follow in my Master's footsteps in going about doing good.

But the Apostle's method of preaching, we have seen, involved not only teaching, but warning; and for frail, fallible man, always liable to go astray, warning must ever be an essential part of any method for bringing him to perfection. Hence I regard it as a necessary part of my duty to warn you of the dangers by which you are surrounded—to warn not only sinners, but Christians. It is true, that according to the gospel as I understand it, no true child of God can ever fall utterly away; and for this we have our Lord's promise, "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." But,

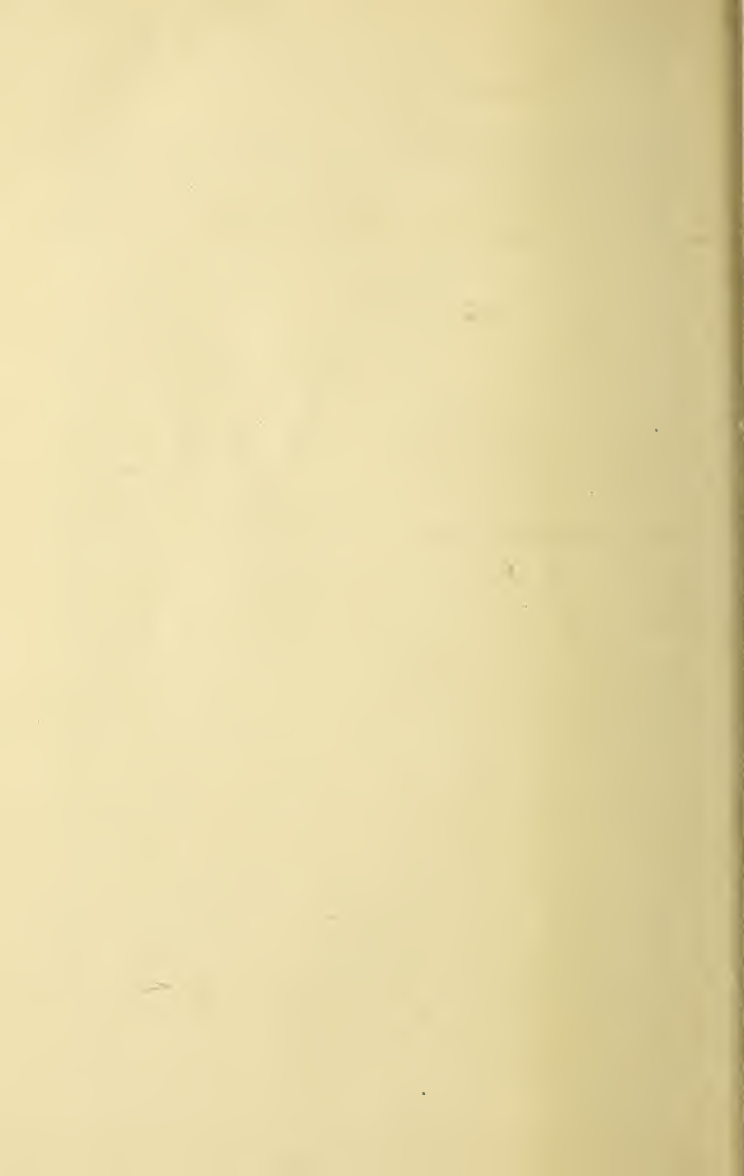
nevertheless, warnings are necessary for the children of God. I will warn you because, while true Christians cannot perish, false professors may; and it is ever your duty to try yourselves by all the warnings of God's word, to examine yourselves whether you be in the faith, lest by any means you should be running in vain. I will warn you, because these warnings are the very means that God uses to keep you from falling; you are rational creatures, and so God uses with you rational means first; if these fail He will then try stronger measures. I will warn you because by giving heed to these warnings you will be saved the painful discipline by which God must restore you. I will warn you because sin is always and everywhere necessarily an evil, injurious to your own spiritual life, and corrupting to the life of the Church; because sin is the very thing from which Christ came to save you, and until you are freed from sin you still need to be warned of its dangers and its tendencies that you may flee from it, as for your life. And I will warn you, because all sin is grieving to the heart of Christ, and sin in His members is a wounding of Him in the house of His friends, an opening of His wounds afresh, a putting Him to an open shame. From the sin and shame of grieving your long suffering Saviour and wounding His loving heart, I would save you by impressing upon you all the warnings of His word. Especially will I feel it my duty to warn

you against those forms of sin that in the present day are coming in like a flood; the sins of worldliness, Sabbath breaking and greed for wealth, that have shaken the very foundations of society, and that threaten to engulf a large portion of the Church itself. Thus publicly will I warn you, and if it becomes my duty to use private admonition, I trust I shall not be found wanting.

But it is obvious that those most in need of warning are those who stand in slippery places, whose feet have never been set upon the rock Christ Jesus, who have never glorified the God in whose hand their breath is. When I think of the state of such, of the jeopardy in which they stand every hour, when I think of their peril, when I think of their sin, when I think of the impending wrath of a neglected God, and the final sentence of an injured Saviour, the wonder is that I can cease to warn them night and day with tears. I recognize the solemn conditions of the office of a watchman—conditions which demand soul for soul, life for life, blood for blood—conditions which no one could meet but for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Who is sufficient for these things! In accepting an office so exacting in its duties, so tremendous in its responsibilities, so fraught with eternal destinies, so pregnant with issues of glory or despair, I commend myself to your patience and your prayers. To your

patience, because no man can fulfil this office without many failures, and in the pressure of many conflicting demands upon his time and attention many things will seem to be failures which are not. To your prayers, because without them all my labors will be in vain. Human efforts alone are but the machinery without the motive power, are but the body without the life. Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but God alone can give the increase. If you would not have this new relation end in disaster and failure, pray for me; pray for me that I may be guided by His wisdom, sustained by His grace, that His blessing may attend all that I do, and that His spirit may go with the preached word, that it may build you up and give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. I indeed preach Christ that I may present every man perfect, in Christ Jesus, but the power is all of God; He alone is able to keep you from falling and present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.



THE RULING ELDER.

PREACHED AT THE ORDINATION OF RULING ELDER

JOHN D. TAYLOR, MARCH 7TH, 1886.

Acts 20, 28: Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.

It is one of the fundamental principles of the Presbyterian Church in all its branches, that the Bible is the charter of the Church, and that the Church has no power to legislate, but only to define and carry out those laws which are found in the Scriptures, or which can be deduced therefrom by "good and necessary inference." It differs in this important principle from all churches which maintain the laxer principle that the Church has power to ordain rites, ceremonies and forms of government, provided they are not forbidden in Scripture. If Christ is the supreme and only law-giver, if the Church exists only by His authority and for the purpose of executing His will, it is plain that the principle which we maintain is the correct one; and the history of the Church shows that

it is the only safe one. Had this principle been observed from the beginning, there would have been no need for the Reformation. It is, of course, freely admitted that there are circumstances that concern the Church, in common with human acts and societies, of which the Scriptures say nothing. These are simple matters of detail, which the church must define in order to carry out the laws which Christ has given her. This principle may be illustrated by the Constitution of the United States. The government of the United States is the creation of the States which compose it; it exists by virtue of the grant of powers given it by the Constitution. The fundamental principles of the government would be immediately overthrown if it were maintained that it could do anything not expressly forbidden by the Constitution. The Constitution exists for the purpose of defining what it may do, and all powers not granted are by that very fact forbidden.

Such being the nature of God's word it might be taken for granted that some form of government would be revealed in the Scriptures; and since the form of government under which any body exists exercises such a vast influence upon the life and workings and development of the body, it is of the last importance to determine what is that form of government which the Scriptures reveal.

I shall not now stop to show that the government

of the Church is not a government directly by the people, but of officers divinely appointed for the purpose of exercising government. The text is addressed to men of whom the Apostle declares that the Holy Ghost had made them overseers. A congregational government is thus too clearly excluded to need further argument.

But the text brings us face to face with a deeper question,—the nature of these officers thus divinely appointed. Turning back to the 17th verse of this chapter, we find that the words of the text are addressed to the Elders or Presbyters of the church at Ephesus. We have every reason to believe that at this time the Christians at Ephesus formed but a single congregation, and accordingly the first point that we determine is that there was a plurality of these officers in one congregation—a point which we shall further verify as we proceed. Turning to the original of the text, we find that the word translated *overseers*, is the same word that is everywhere else rendered *Bishops*. It is, in fact, the word of which *Bishop* is a corruption, and of which *Episcopal* is a derivation. So plain is this fact, that in the revised version the word is rendered *Bishops*, by Episcopal translators

The second point then, that we make from the the text, is the identity of Bishops and Presbyters, and the consequent fact that the New Testament Bishop, instead of presiding over a number of churches ac-

cording to the Episcopal theory, was one of a number of officers presiding over a single church. But we do not draw so important a conclusion as this, and one so opposed to the government which has existed in the Church from very early times, upon the authority of a single text.

The Apostle Paul addresses his Epistle to the Philippians to the "saints which are at Philippi, with the Bishops and Deacons." If he had said "the Elders and Deacons," the Episcopal interpretation that the office of Bishop was at the time vacant in the church, might be maintained. If he had said "the Bishop and Deacons," it might be maintained that for same reason the Elders were omitted. But as he says the "Bishops and Deacons," there is no escape from the conclusion that, as at Ephesus, so at Philippi, there was a plurality of Bishops in a single congregation.

Again, we find that although the Apostle went through all the cities where he had organized churches ordaining Elders in every church, (Acts 14:23,) he yet sums up the officers of the church, in his Epistle to Timothy, under the two terms, *Bishops* and *Deacons*, giving qualifications for these offices, and saying nothing about Elders; and when we turn to the Epistle to Titus we find the explanation of this; he had sent Titus to Crete to ordain Elders in every city, and the qualifications of these Elders he gives in a few terms, adding these words: "For a Bishop must be grave," etc. There

could be no reason why the qualifications of a Bishop should be assigned in explanation of the qualifications of those to be ordained Elders, unless the two offices were identical.

So plain is this in Scripture that it is admitted by all learned Episcopalians, and Dr. Conybeare, whose name, in connection with that of Dean Howson, will ever be held in grateful remembrance for their immortal life of St. Paul, is responsible for the statement, that no respectable Episcopal authority will be found to deny that in the New Testament the terms *Bishop* and *Presbyter*, are used interchangeably; while Bishop Lightfoot, with the approbation of Dean Stanley, bases upon this fact the conclusion that "Presbytery is not a later growth but of Episcopacy, but that Episcopacy is a later growth out of Presbytery."

With such admissions as these, it may be wondered upon what the Episcopalians base their form of government, and especially upon what they base their exclusive claim, which unchurches all who do not conform to it. The answer is found in the difference of fundamental position announced at the outset. If we admit the discretionary power of the Church, it is not necessary to go to the Scriptures for our form of government, provided we do not introduce anything expressly forbidden. Accordingly we find that they seek their authority,

not in the Scriptures, but in historical tradition, and in the testimonies of the early Fathers. On this ground we do not fear to meet them; they have appealed unto the Fathers, unto the Fathers let us go.

But I must here pause, and insist that, in admitting this appeal, we distinctly repudiate the authority of the Fathers in matters of faith and practice. We appeal to them simply as historical witnesses, and if their testimony were against us, our position would remain unshaken. Bishop Lighfoot is clear-sighted enough to perceive this, and so seeks to prove that the Episcopal form of government was established before the end of the first century, and during the lifetime of the Apostle John, in order to plead his authority for it, and to establish the claim that, while the Bishops were not successors to the Apostles, (for he distinctly repudiates that doctrine), this form of government became necessary after the Apostolic office became extinct: so that while its foundations were not sufficient to justify them in unchurching others (and may God bless him for that noble declaration against intolerance!) they were yet enough to make them cling to it with loving veneration. Accordingly he pursues his historical investigations with great zeal and diligence, for the purpose of finding Bishops before the end of the first century; and his success is equal to his zeal, for he finds Bishops everywhere; wherever there was a Christian church, there

he finds a Bishop. He finds, in short, just that state of things that a Presbyterian would expect to find; he finds that state of things which Vice-Principal Hatch, another learned Episcopal authority, finds at the same period, when he declared that "the Bishop of each congregation bore the same relation to his Presbyters that the chairman of a committee bears to the members of the committee;" or, as Presbyterians would say, "as the Moderator of a church Session bears to the Session over which he presides."

But even this, you observe, is a slight departure from New Testament usage, where the term Bishop did not designate the leading or presiding Presbyter in each congregation, but was applied to all alike; and we still find this New Testament usage prevailing in the earliest uninspired Christian writings. In the newly discovered *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* the local officers of the church are designated by the terms *Bishops* and *Deacons*, and in the Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians the same classification is observed; and he further admonishes the church not to rise up against its *Elders*. It is very noticeable that in the two earliest uninspired writings of the Church, exactly the same usage is observed as in the New Testament, while shortly afterwards we find that slight departure to which we have just alluded.

But before long it cannot still be said that the Bishop bore the same relation to his Presbyters as the chair-

man of a committee bears to the members of the committee ; but that as they had assumed the exclusive title of Bishop, so they begin to assume the exclusive powers of the office. Yet even now is the Bishop still but the pastor of a single congregation We find in this period bishoprics so small that Gregory Thaumaturgus expresses satisfaction at leaving in his bishopric of Neo Cesarea no more unbelievers than he had found believers, and gives this number as seventeen. We find bishoprics so close together that three or four Bishops could take tea together and walk home by bed-time. We find bishoprics so numerous that in the small territory between the Tiber and the Tuscan sea there were no less than thirty-five Bishops, or seven more than in the Church of England to-day. We find in the third century that Cyprian could assemble at Carthage, from the narrow strip of civilized territory along the northern shore of Africa as many as eighty-seven Bishops; and that in the following century over five hundred Bishops came together, representing the two parties in the Church, for the purpose of healing the Donatist schism.

It is evident that through all this period the term *Bishop* was applied to a great many who were merely pastors of single congregations, and at the early part of this period the term had no other meaning. For Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, whose Epistles are regarded as the sheet-anchor of Episcopacy, speaks of

each church which he visited on his journey to Rome, where he suffered martyrdom, as organized with a Bishop and a plurality of Presbyters and of Deacons. But before the end of this period there were Bishops in large towns like Rome and Carthage, where many churches had grown up under the rule of a single church, and where the Bishop of the parent church retained authority over the colonies which it sent forth, and where the churches in the surrounding country looked to the leading Bishop to arbitrate matters of dispute, and call them together in ecclesiastical councils—there were Bishops, I say, in circumstances like these, who furnish the type of the modern diocesan Bishop. And here we may bring in the testimony of Jerome who, in the fourth century, declared that originally Bishops and Presbyters were the same, and that the churches were governed by a common council of Presbyters; but that “*little by little*, that the roots of dissention might be torn up, the whole trouble was devolved on one;” and supports his position by referring to the same Scriptures that I have already quoted.

This gradual growth of Episcopacy to which Jerome alludes was a process that could not be checked; there were those indeed who sought to check it, but the effort was in vain. Thus Cyprian earnestly contends for the equality of all Bishops, as the true successors of the Apostles, and representing in their

united whole the unity of the church; and so when one points to Cyprian as holding the doctrine of Apostolical succession, he must remember that while Cyprian, as the Bishop of a large city, might resemble a diocesan Bishop, he puts on an equality with himself the Bishop of the smallest town or village. According to Cyprian it is the Christian ministry who are the successors to the Apostles. But the protest of Cyprian was in vain; the process of evolution could not be checked; as the Moderator of the Elders of a congregation became the absolute Bishop of the congregation; as the convener of the Bishops in a small section of territory became the absolute Bishop of the diocese; so the Bishop of a great metropolis, as convener of all the Bishops in the surrounding country, gradually attained to the power and supremacy of the Metropolitan or Archbishop. And then, from one cause and another, distinctions arose between the different Metropolitans, until at last the whole Church was organized into two great systems of Bishops, revolving around the two great centres of power, Rome and Constantinople. But no society organized upon the principle of a hierarchy can exist with a double head. Hence arose the long warfare for supremacy between the Bishops of Rome and Constantinople, ending at last in the great schism between the East and the West; the Eastern or Greek churches recognizing the authority of the Patri-

arch of Constantinople, and the Western or Latin Churches recognizing the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome. In the Eastern Churches this supremacy never became so absolute, but in the West we see the workings of Episcopacy carried out to their logical and extreme results; with an iron-handed despot wielding absolute ecclesiastical power over all who own his sway, and handing down that power through a graded system of inferior despots, from the Archbishop to the parish priest.

But amid all this strife and rivalry of the Bishops, it may be inquired what had become of those Elders of the congregation who so early lost the title of Bishop. The answer of history is plain: In the smaller churches, after the duties of their office were absorbed by the Bishop, as individual Elders passed away their places would cease to be filled and their office would become extinct. In the larger churches, as the Bishop attained to something of the state of a Diocesan, his Elders or Presbyters would, some of them, be retained to perform pastoral and ministerial duties in the parent church, (just as now we find in the cathedral churches in Roman Catholic and Anglican countries, a plurality of Presbyters performing these duties); some would be sent forth to perform the same duties in the smaller congregations that sprung up under its care; while others were sent forth to minister in the country and village churches, after the right

of electing their own Bishop was taken away from them. This last stretch of Episcopal power did not take place for many centuries, and its consummation not only shows the use that was made of the Presbyters, but also explains the disappearance of those country and village Bishops whom we found so abundant as late as the fourth century. In absorbing into themselves the powers and duties of their Presbyters they had laid the foundation for their own degradation.

But it must not be supposed that these changes took place everywhere at once, or that the Elders of small churches gave up the powers of their office without a struggle. In Northern Africa we find distinct recognition, for several centuries, of an order of officers called *Elders of the People*. In the isle of Iona where, far from the centre of Roman power, the Roman influence was longest resisted, we find a distinctly Presbyterian form of government; while in Ireland, where the gospel was received, not from Rome, but from Iona, Archbishop Usher finds that in the sixth century there were 365 churches, 365 Bishops and 3,000 Presbyters—that is to say, a Bishop and a plurality of Presbyters to each congregation. The Waldenses in their mountain fastnesses and secluded valleys preserved through centuries of persecution their primitive Presbyterian government and Apostolic purity of doctrine; and maintained their inde-

pendence of Rome until they joined hands with the Protestant churches of the Reformation. They are now enrolled as members of the Pan-Presbyterian Alliance.

We find, then, that neither the word of God nor the history of the church gives any countenance to any form of government but the Presbyterian. Presbyterian government begins when first the church emerges from the family. As soon as the church became too large for the father of all to govern the whole, we find the government in the hands of heads of families; and when the church became too large for this, leading heads of families were chosen to exercise this rule—those Elders of the congregation we find throughout all the history of the people of God. They existed before the laws of Moses, for to them Moses submits his credentials from God. We find them in the wilderness and in the Promised Land; we find them in the days of the Judges and in the days of the Kings; in the captivity and in the restoration; their authority was recognized by our Lord when he was on the earth; and in John's Apocalyptic vision of the consummation of things he sees four and twenty Elders sitting before the Throne of God.

The Apostolic office was temporary, and designed for a particular emergency in the church. They were to bear witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ; to endow others with miraculous powers for repeating

and confirming their testimony: and to give to the church an authoritative and infallible exposition of the truth of Jesus Christ. The office of the Presbyter was permanent, and designed to last through all changes of time and place and circumstance. So far as the Apostles were Presbyters, all Presbyters are their successors; so far as they were Ministers of the Word, all Ministers of the Word are their successors; but so far as they were Apostles they have no successors; and for a set of men to claim that succession is an unlawful usurpation of authority to which they have no right, and an unwarrantable claim to powers which they palpably do not possess.

To give permanence to the Presbyterian form of government it was arranged in the providence of God that the founders of the Christian Church should find established all over the world Jewish Synagogues, which were governed by a bench of Ruling Elders; of this fact the researches of the learned of all shades and opinions assure us beyond dispute. To the Jewish Synagogues the message of the gospel was first delivered. When the whole or a majority of the congregation received the Gospel their former organization continued without change, only that what had been a Jewish Synagogue was now called a Christian Church; where only a minority received the Gospel they formed a new Synagogue or church, on the model of their former organization, and when a

church was organized entirely of heathen elements the same plan of organization was, of course, adopted as in Jewish churches. Thus it was that, without any formal institution of such form of government, we find Presbyterian government everywhere established by the Apostles. There is no record of the institution of the office of Presbyter in the New Testament, simply because this office was as old as the church of God; and the Christian Church was not a new church, but simply a new dispensation of the same church, whose charter we find in the covenant made with Abraham—a church which had been governed by Presbyters from his time to the time of the Apostles,—and a church which was to be governed by Presbyters until time should be no more.

When we come to examine from the New Testament the *nature* of this Presbyterian rule, we find that while there was no distinction of rank among Presbyters as Rulers, there was yet a certain pre-eminence attached to one class of Presbyters, not because of any greater authority as Rulers, but because in addition to the office of ruling they possessed the superadded office of Ministers of the Word. This is placed beyond dispute by the following passage: (1st Timothy, 5:17,) “Let the Elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine” Here it is plainly taught that there are two classes of Elders,

one of which consists of those who merely rule, while the other consists of those who labor in the word and doctrine, as well as rule; or to put it differently, that the nature of the office of a Presbyter is to rule, and that all Presbyters are rulers, but that to them (and to them only) may also be given the office of Ministers of the Word; making a class of Presbyters distinct from the others, not in their authority as rulers, but simply in the honor and duties attaching to them as Ministers of the Word *

Whether there were any Ministers of the Word among the Elders of Ephesus, to whom Paul addresses the text, we are not informed. It is probable that there was at least one, perhaps more; but it is not as Ministers of the Word that they are addressed, but as Presbyters; the duties described in the text, then, are the duties of all Presbyters, the duties of Ruling Elders. If the Minister of the Word is to heed the

*In this division of Presbyters into two classes, the Christian Church again follows the pattern of the Jewish Synagogue. In every Jewish congregation one of the Elders had the especial duty of presiding at public worship and instructing the people in the word of God. He was called the "Angel of the Synagogue." The word simply means *messenger*, and implies that he was the messenger or ambassador from God to the people. The same language is used of the Christian Church, where our Lord sends letters by John to the Angels of the Seven Churches of Asia; that is, the Minister of the Word, or teaching Elder, in each of those congregations. Some have thought that both in the Synagogue and Christian Church it was a matter of private arrangement between the Elders themselves who should perform the duty of public instruction. The New Testament lays too much stress upon an especial call to the work of preaching the gospel, to permit us to accept this view. It was a special office with a special call and a special ordination. It is, perhaps, needless to add that it was this teaching Elder who, from being naturally the Moderator of the church session, gradually assumed the exclusive use of the title and powers of a Bishop.

same charge, it is because he too is an Elder. We find now the practical value of what we have argued at so much length, namely, that the Ruling Elder is a Bishop; for as Jerome tells us, the term *Presbyter* was the title of age and dignity; the term *Bishop*, the title of office; the term *Presbyter* proclaims him a Ruler, the term *Bishop* shows the nature of that Rule.

The literal meaning of the word *Bishop* is an overseer; the exhortation of the text properly rendered is, Take heed unto the flock in which the Holy Ghost hath made you Bishops, or overseers. The oversight of the flock is, then, the duty of the Ruling Elder,—a duty that he is to perform both in his individual capacity and as a member of the body of Ruling Elders in concert with his colleagues. It is needless to say that this oversight is not inquisitorial, but fatherly; the whole spirit of the Gospel demonstrates this; and the fact that this office is not only called by the name overseer, but by the venerable name of Elder—a term derived from the Patriarchal government, is an added proof of the same. This oversight involves, of course, a thorough knowledge of the flock, both as a congregation and as individuals. The Elders must not only have personal acquaintance with all the members of the congregation, but by visits to their homes must acquaint themselves sufficiently with their affairs, to know their needs and their trials, their

walk and conversation, and the manner in which they fulfil their Christian duties, in order that they may guard them against temptation, gently admonish them of their duties, encourage them in despondency and support them in trials.

But all this is more clearly defined, and more fully brought forth in the description of their office that follows: it is said that they are to *feed* the Church of God; now when we examine the original here, we find that it is not brought out by this expression; the true meaning is that they are to act as Shepherds or Pastors of the Church. In confining the word Pastor to the Minister of the Word, we are guilty of the same error in which the early church fell, of applying to him alone the title of Bishop. All Elders are pastors, and the oversight which they take is a pastoral oversight, and the duties which they perform are well presented to us under the figure of a shepherd and his flock. As shepherds, then, they are the guardians of the flock. "I know this," says the Apostle, "that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock; also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

It is because of this danger that the Apostle gives them the charge of the text, and accordingly it must be their especial duty as shepherds to preserve the flock from false doctrine, whether it comes from within

or from without; and if they are to preserve them from the dangerous attacks of false doctrine, they must equally preserve them from the influence of false example, by exercising proper discipline over those who, by their example, lead others astray, and destroy the peace and purity of the flock, and by exercising judicious care in admitting members into the church, that no wolves in sheep's clothing shall enter into the flock. As shepherds of the flock it is their further duty to reclaim the wandering. They have studied ill the example of the Chief Shepherd who have not learned this; for the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost; and there is no picture of His office to which our hearts cling more fondly than that of the Good Shepherd seeking the wandering sheep, and bringing it home with rejoicing. From His example, too, we learn what is a shepherd's care of the sick, the helpless and the aged; how gently he leads them, how tenderly He watches over them and sympathizes with them; how patiently He bears their griefs, and carries their sorrows. And further, he would be a poor shepherd who did not care for the *lambs* of the flock. In our Lord's parting charge to Peter, He twice tells him, "shepherd my sheep," and once "shepherd my lambs;" and centuries before, when Isaiah prophesied of our Lord that He should feed his flock like a shepherd, he adds that he should gather the lambs with His arms and carry

them in His bosom. The shepherd that neglects the lambs will soon have no flock to watch over. The pastors of the church must be diligent in seeing that children are presented by their parents for baptism; that they are carefully taught in the word of God, both at home and in church and Sabbath-schools, that they have all the restraints of pious influence and example thrown around them, to preserve them from the temptations of the world, and the perils of youth, and to guide them into a full recognition of their Christian duties, and profession of their faith in Christ.

There is still another truth in the Oriental idea of a shepherd, that is more clearly brought out in other places in the New Testament. In the East the shepherd did not drive his sheep, but led them, as our Lord says of His sheep, "I know them and they follow me." Hence it is that the Elders of the Church are called *leaders* or *guides*; this is the case in the original of Hebrews, 13:17, where the idea is lost in our translation, and it is further brought out in the charge of the Apostle Peter to the Elders, where he exhorts them to be *ensamples* to the flock. That the Elders may preserve the flock in the right ways of the Lord, they must themselves be pre-eminent in every Christian virtue. If they would have the flock abounding in the work and labors of the Lord they must themselves be foremost in every Christian

enterprise. The flock will follow where the shepherds lead. Wherever you find the body of Ruling Elders eminent in piety, abundant in good works, irreproachable in their private and official character, zealous in the prosecution of their duties, and leaders in every effort for the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ, there you will find a flock earnest, united and consecrated, provoking one another only to love and good works. Happy is that minister whose hands are so sustained; happy is that people that has such men for its rulers.

But there is one thing more which I must not forbear to add, for while it is involved in what has gone before, it is so important as to need explicit statement: "They watch for your souls," says the Apostle, "as they that must give account." No more solemn view of the duties of a Ruling Elder can be given than is contained in these words. They are not spoken to ministers alone, but to all the rulers of the church; to seek diligently the fruit of the preached word is expressly enumerated on the authority of this text among the duties of a Ruling Elder laid down in our form of government. How many a passing impression might be deepened into a saving conviction, how many a dormant faith might be brought out into conscious activity; how many an inactive professor might be made of use in the church of God; how many a fleeting resolution of stricter conformity

might become an abiding aspiration for a higher degree of holiness, if not only the Minister of the Word, but all the Elders were diligent in watching the effect of the truth, in fostering and conserving its temporary results, and in setting in motion measures for putting into practice its commands.

Oh, brethren of the Eldership, if this is our office, what a responsibility is ours! The care of souls, immortal souls, whose eternal destinies so largely depend upon the way in which we discharge the duties of our office! With this view of our pastoral duties before us do we need to have repeated the exhortation of the Apostle, "Take heed unto yourselves?" What conscientiousness in self-examination, what circumspection in action, what perseverance in prayer, is demanded of those that would exhibit in their own lives that sobriety, that fidelity, that spiritual-mindedness, that is necessary to fit them to be ensamples unto the flock, and shepherds unto the church of God! And with what diligence ought we to give heed to his farther admonition to take heed unto the flock in which the Holy Ghost had made them Bishops! What attention ought we to give to their needs, how constantly ought we to keep their interest in mind, how continually ought we to bear them in our hearts before God, that we may fulfil those solemn duties which the Holy Ghost hath laid upon us, that we may give our account with joy and not with grief!

And if we need a motive for this we have it in the last words of the text: It is the church of God which he purchased with his own blood to which we give our labors. If he gave his life for the church, ought we not to give our lives to it? What though it involve toil, and labor, and self sacrifice, shall not we fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for his body's sake, which is the church? Even though the duties of our office sometimes require of us thankless tasks, even though ingratitude sometimes rewards the most self-denying labors, we can keep on unswervingly in the path of duty, when we remember that it is His church for which we labor, that it is the souls for which He died, for which we watch; and that when the Chief Shepherd shall appear we shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. It is from His hands that we receive our high commission, and from his hands will we receive our enduring reward; and the sweetness and the fullness of that reward will be to commit forever into His hands the glorified objects of our pastoral care, that the Lamb himself may feed them, and may lead them unto fountains of living waters, and that God may wipe away all tears from their eyes.

THE DEACON.

PREACHED AT THE ORDINATION OF DEACONS HENRY C.
MCQUEEN AND JOHN H. CURRIE, MARCH 14, 1886.

I *Tim.* 3:13.—*For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus :*

We found last Sunday that the Apostle Paul twice sums up the officers of a congregation under the two terms, *Bishops* and *Deacons*, and that in the earliest writings after the Apostolic Age, such as the newly discovered *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, and the Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians, the same classification was observed. Having discussed the former of these offices upon last Sunday we would devote our attention to-day to the latter. The fact that it is found in such a classification shows that it is one of the permanent and not one of the temporary or extraordinary offices of the church; while the text is sufficient to convince us of the importance of the office. For,

says the Apostle, "they that have used the office of a Deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith." The text naturally presents us with a threefold division of the subject; what is the office of a Deacon, what it is to use it well, and what is that good degree which they purchase to themselves.

Concerning the nature of the office of Deacon, we naturally inquire, first, what the word itself can teach us. The word means *servant*, more especially an *attendant*, hence from the idea of an attendant at the table, comes the idea of *dispensing*. It is this idea which probably gave rise to its use with reference to the Ministry of the Word. A Minister of the Word (for the original of the word minister is just the same word Deacon) is one who dispenses the word of God, the bread of life. But while the word Deacon is used with qualifying words of other officers, we find that without qualification, or limitation of other words, it is used to denote a particular officer. And we must inquire from other sources the nature of that attendance or ministry that the word when thus used denotes. We nowhere in the New Testament find the record of the institution of an office called by this name; but in the 6th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we do find the institution* of an office distinct

*In using this word *institution*, it is not intended to decide the disputed question, whether there were Deacons in the church previous to this time. If, as some hold, (and I am rather inclined to agree with them) the counterpart of the office of Deacon was found in the Jewish Synagogue, we may naturally suppose that in the church at Jerusa-

in its nature from the offices of governing and teaching exercised by the Apostles and Elders, and while the word *Deacon* is not used in this form concerning this office, we do find the use of two words that bear the same relation to the word *Deacon* that the words *serve* and *service* bear to the word *servant*. The exigency which gave rise to the institution of this office—was that certain widows were neglected in the daily ministration,—literally the daily *deaconing*, and when the Apostles heard of it they said: “It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables”—literally *deacon* tables. Hence the institution of this office for the discharge of that duty which was not consistent with the duty of the Apostles: “Seek ye out seven men of good report whom we may set over this business, but we will give ourselves wholly to prayer and the ministry of the word.” Here we have a plain contrast between the duties of the Apostles and the duties of these seven; the one were to attend to the ministry of the word, the other to the ministry of tables. We need not inquire

lem, and wherever the Christian church had been planted, there would already be Deacons in each congregation. A reference to such Deacons may perhaps be found in the “young men” who carried out the bodies of Ananias and Sapphira. The reader will observe that I have treated the office of the Seven as an extraordinary office, furnishing to us on a large scale the pattern for the same office on a smaller scale. Whether ordinary Deacons were already found in particular congregations, and the Seven were only needed to take general oversight of the work in this particular emergency, or whether the office of the Seven was an office altogether new;—whether, in short, the ordinary office gave rise to the extraordinary, or the extraordinary gave rise to the ordinary: in either case our argument remains the same, and our information concerning the nature of this office is derived from the institution of the Seven.

particularly whether money tables or eating tables are here meant, for we do not suppose that the seven waited literally upon either; they were neither money changers nor dining-room servants. What is clearly meant by the expression is the oversight of the temporal affairs of the church,—provision for the temporal wants of the church, as the Apostles provided for its spiritual wants; they were to do what the Apostles had tried to do, before their appointment; but which they had been unable to do efficiently on account of their other duties. Before this time we know from one or two cases mentioned, that when one of the wealthy members of the church devoted his property to the good of the whole church he sold his possessions and laid the money at the Apostles' feet. They doubtless handed it over to others whom they thought fit, to be expended for the good of the whole. But this expenditure having no organized oversight became unsatisfactory, and the distribution of its benefits unequal, as we have seen. The duties of these Seven were to take this oversight, correct these inequalities, and to remove all grounds of complaint. They would care not only for the poor in the church, but would naturally see to the support of the Apostles and Elders and Evangelists who, by devoting themselves to the spiritual welfare of the church, cut themselves off from other means of support; and whatever other temporal interest the church

might have, the Seven would care for, for the same reason that led to their appointment.

That the appointment of these Seven was an appointment to the office of Deacon, is not only evident from the use of the kindred words in connection with this appointment, but is a matter of general agreement among all parties; and it being so evident that this appointment was made for the purpose of taking oversight of the temporal interests of the church, there would appear no room for any difference of opinion with regard to the nature of the office of Deacon; to receive the contributions of the church, to dispense them for the use of the poor, for the maintenance of the ministry, for the support of all the missionary, evangelistic and charitable enterprises of the church, and to care for such property as it might be necessary for the church to acquire, would appear beyond dispute to be the duties of a Deacon. But as it has been maintained in the Church that Bishops were a higher order of the ministry than Presbyters, so it has been maintained by the same parties that Deacons constitute another order of the ministry lower than Presbyters; their duties being to preach and baptise, but not to administer the Lord's Supper. It becomes us, then, in ordaining men to this office to inquire with all charity for the views of others, but with all fidelity to the truth, which is right, and which is wrong.

It is said by those who maintain that the diaconate is an order of the ministry, that the qualifications demanded of the Seven were out of all proportion to the duties of their office, if those duties were what we have declared them to be. They were to be men not only of good report, but full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom; and if these are not qualifications for preaching, where could you find men qualified to preach? In replying to this, it is freely admitted that if we now had men like Stephen and Philip, we could not spare them for Deacons, because we would need them all for the ministry of the word. But it must be remembered that this appointment was made in the days of the plentiful outpouring of the Spirit's gifts; there were probably few members of the church of Jerusalem who were not more full of the Holy Ghost, more completely consecrated to the Master, than most ministers in our own day. And appointments to office at that time must necessarily be of men pre-eminent in gifts among their brethren and contemporaries. The gifts of Deacons, then, must be proportionate to the gifts of the private members at that time, and not to the gifts of the Church in our own day. But more than this, not only was the state of the church extraordinary, but the nature of their office was extraordinary; while their duties were of the same nature as the duties of ordinary deacons, they were to be executed upon an ex-

traordinary scale. The Christian community of Jerusalem now numbered from five to ten thousand adult members; and the care of all these, with regard to their temporal maintenance, was committed to these Seven; accordingly they occupied a position in the church, as compared with other Deacons, similar to that which the Apostles occupied, compared with other Presbyters; or to put it differently, they bore the same relation to the Apostles that other Deacons bear to other Presbyters; hence we need not be surprised that the gifts of these Deacons transcend the gifts of other Deacons, as the gifts of the Apostles transcend the gifts of other Presbyters.

But it may be said that the gifts of *ordinary* Deacons as described in the 3rd chapter of Timothy, would also include qualifications for preaching, inasmuch as they are to hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience, and by using their office well, they purchase to themselves great boldness in the faith. This, it is claimed, indicates that they are to exercise the duties of a preacher. But a candid examination fails to warrant any such inference; to hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience is the duty of every private member of the church, and while the brother who is weak in the faith is to be treated with all tenderness as a brother, yet none such are to be elevated into office; we are to receive members into the church, who may hold many errors, provided they hold to

Christ as the ground of their salvation; but to elevate to office any one holding serious error would be to put the seal of the Church's endorsement upon that error. Hence the Presbyterian church in admitting to membership only demands satisfactory proof of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but in admitting to office it demands the same subscription to its doctrinal standards of Ministers, Ruling Elders and Deacons. And when we examine the other qualifications required of the Deacon in the passage before us, we find that they are just such as will fit him for the discharge of the duties of this office,—gravity of deportment, blamelessness of Christian character, and freedom from such infirmities as are often found in Christians but which would be peculiarly hurtful in the discharge of the Deacon's duties, together with that doctrinal soundness that we have found to be necessary for all the officers of the church. But among these qualifications we do not find mentioned that "aptness to teach" which is required of the Presbyterian, and which would be essential to the Deacon, if preaching the word was a part of his official duties. Even of the ruling Elder aptness to teach is required, for although he does not publicly labor in word and doctrine, private instruction is a necessary part of his pastoral work. If the Deacon were a preacher this omission would be incomprehensible.

It is further maintained that whatever our opinion

with regard to the qualifications of Deacons, the fact remains that at least two of the Seven did preach and that at least one of them baptised; that Stephen preached, and that Philip both preached and baptised. With regard to this it may be answered, that we have no evidence that Stephen preached at all; he did indeed boldly defend the truth in argument with his former friends and associates, but that is just the duty of every private Christian who possesses the proper gifts; and we have recorded at some length a speech that Stephen made that might be called a sermon, but that was when put on trial for his life, and compelled to make answer of the faith that was in him. These facts are no grounds on which to set aside the plain teachings of the passage, which puts the official duties of Stephen in clear opposition to the ministry of the word. With regard to Philip the case is different. That he exercised the full duties of a preacher we do not deny; yea, we affirm, while those who differ from us deny. When Philip preached it was after the church at Jerusalem had been scattered by the persecution that followed the martyrdom of Stephen. Only the Apostles remained at Jerusalem, while those who were scattered abroad, went everywhere preaching the word. The duties of Philip as a Deacon were then necessarily suspended, and having well discharged those duties while there was necessity and opportunity for them, he is now set

apart to a different work—that of an Evangelist. We might gather this merely from the fact that he did preach, when the duties of his former office were so expressly distinguished from preaching, but we have the further warrant for this view from the fact that he is expressly called an Evangelist in one of the later chapters of the Acts of the Apostles; and if Prelatists insist that Philip performed these duties of preaching and baptising as a Deacon, they will find it impossible to prove that he did not, as Deacon, perform *all* the duties of a minister.

The scriptures nowhere endorse the idea that the administration of the Lord's Supper involves any higher authority than the administration of baptism, and the authoritative exposition of the word of God. If Philip administered baptism we have no authority for denying that he administered the Lord's Supper; if any one denies it, it is as easy for us to affirm. And in that time of the Church's first love, when Christians scarcely ever met without breaking bread in remembrance of their Lord, is it likely that those whom Philip admitted unto the church by baptism, were not immediately admitted to meet at the Lord's Table, to obey His dying command in remembrance of Him? But it is urged that their admission to the Church was not yet complete until the Apostles came down from Jerusalem and laid their hands upon them. This laying on of the Apostles' hands, the Prelatists

maintain, was the administration of the rite of confirmation; but an examination of the scripture authorities shows that this view is without foundation, and results from a misapprehension of the state of the Church, and the nature of the Apostolic office. When a church was organized in Apostolic times it was not completely endowed until at least some of its members received some of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. The sheet-anchor of the Church's faith was the resurrection of Jesus Christ; the special office to which the Apostles were ordained, was to bear personal witness to that resurrection; but as twelve men could not bear that testimony personally to all the world, Christ gave them the power of conferring miraculous gifts upon others who should repeat their testimony: so that whenever a Christian church was founded they endowed men with these gifts, that they might be able to say, "The man who conferred this gift upon me bore witness that he had seen the Lord after His resurrection." Thus did the power of God confirm the truth of their testimony, and only thus could so wonderful a fact have received such widespread acceptance in so short a time. Of these miraculous spiritual gifts, the Apostle Paul makes repeated mention, and wrote the church at Rome, which had never received a visit from an Apostle, that he desired to come to them that he might impart unto them some spiritual gift. The rite of confirmation may be a

beautiful form of introduction into the church when placed upon right grounds, and when separated from the errors associated with it and liable to grow out of the word itself; for a minister of the gospel to place his hands upon the head of each member admitted into the church, and ask for them God's defence and blessing, is in itself an appropriate and beautiful custom; but when it is claimed that they who administer this rite are acting as the successors of the Apostles, and are doing what the Apostles did when they came down to Samaria, our proper answer is to ask: "Where are the miraculous gifts that should follow the laying on of your hands?" But even if we grant, for the sake of argument, that the Apostles came down to Samaria to do what a Prelatical Bishop does in an Episcopal visitation, the Prelatist is still without any ground for distinguishing between the office of Philip and the office of a full minister of the gospel. For even if Phillip did only baptise those who believed, and delay the administration of the Lord's Supper, that is only what a Presbyter of the Episcopal church would have done, while awaiting the coming of the Bishop, unless that coming were long delayed. Had Philip been a minister of full rank, according to the Prelatist, he would or would not have administered the Lord's Supper, just according to circumstances, and so, whether he did or whether he did not, the Prelatist has no ground for

affirming that he was not a full minister of the gospel, unless it can be shown that the Apostles came down to Samaria to administer the Lord's Supper, which no Prelatist has ever attempted. He should be careful, therefore, lest in claiming that Philip was acting as a Deacon at this time, he should be compelled to give to the Deacon the full rank of the ministry. There is no scriptural ground why, if any spiritual duties are given to the Deacon, he should not have all.

As a matter of fact in the history of the church when Deacons began to usurp the duties of the ministry, the administration of the Lord's Supper was denied to them only because of the necessity of making some distinction between the different orders; and as the claim for their right to preach must rest in Philip's preaching, or have no foundation whatever, it was necessary also to give them the right to baptise, because Philip baptised; the administration of the Lord's Supper was then the only thing left to deny them. And it was in accord with the growing tendencies of the church that this should be the point of difference; for as the Lord's Supper came to be regarded as a sacrifice, and the administration of it as the duty of a Priest, only those who had reached the full rank of the Priesthood, as the office of a Presbyter was now called, were regarded as entitled to administer it. But this brings us to the historical consideration of the nature of this office.

It may be asked: How did it arise that at quite an early period of the church we find Deacons preaching and baptising? The discussion pursued last Sunday will make it easier to answer this, for the same motives of human ambition that would lead one Presbyter to seek supremacy over others would, under the same conditions, lead Deacons to assume the duties of a higher office that did not belong to them. We may at the close see very practical reasons for the discontinuance of those duties that rightfully belong to the Deacons; this in the smaller churches, would lead to the discontinuance of the office of Deacon altogether, just as the Ruling Elders disappeared in the smaller churches when the duties of their office were absorbed by the Pastor. But in the larger churches, just as the Bishop sent his Presbyters out to minister to the smaller churches that grew up under his charge, so he seems to have attached the Deacons more particularly to his own person, to lighten his labors and to relieve him of the more onerous duties of preaching and baptising, while he reserved himself for his more strictly "Apostolical" duties. So it was that the ambition of the Bishops worked together with the ambition of the Deacons to promote their advancement to the duties of a higher office.

But we have sufficient historical testimony to show that this change did not come about all at once, and

was not for some time universally acquiesced in; and this fact is sufficient to show that it *was* a change, and that in the beginning it was not so. The famous Origen, in the third century, declared that the Deacons presided over the tables of the church; and in speaking of the corruptions that had crept in among them, charges them with neglecting the poor, and appropriating to their own use the charitable funds of the church. Ambrose, in the fourth century, declares that in his day Deacons were ordinarily not permitted to preach; while Chrysostom in the same century, but in another part of the church, declares that in his day no such Deacons existed as those of Apostolic times, and expresses it as his opinion that it ought to have been then as in the days of the Apostles. Jerome, the author of the Latin translation of the Bible still used in the Roman Catholic church, and the most learned Father of his day, speaks of the Deacon as a "minister of tables and widows"—a clear reference to the passage already cited in the Acts of the Apostles. The Sixth Council of Constantinople, held in the year 680, declares that the scriptural Deacons were no other than overseers of the poor, and that such was the opinion of the most ancient Fathers. (For references to these authorities see Miller on Presbyterianism.)

During this transition period there was a heresy growing up in the church that fostered this change.

As the idea became prevalent that the officers of the church were a Priestly caste, the tendency was to remove them farther and farther from the secular life of the people, and to confine them more strictly to such duties as seemed proper to a Priesthood. This heresy became crystalized in two terms that should be forever banished from Protestant lips; these are the terms, *Clergy* and *Laity*. To the word *Laity* there is no objection in itself; it simply denotes the *people*, as distinguished from their officers, and is derived from a word that is commonly used in the scriptures to designate the chosen people of God. The objection to the word *Laity* is that it always suggests the contrasting term *Clergy*; but this word *Clergy*, besides being based upon a blunder with regard to a scriptural fact, contains within itself the worst seeds of Popery. The idea that the word contains is, that the ministry of the church is a Priestly class, like the tribe of Levi in the Old Testament dispensation, separated by an external sanctity from the rest of the people of God; and that as such they were God's peculiar inheritance, for *inheritance* is the meaning of the word *Clergy*. Now the whole of God's ancient people are very often spoken of as God's inheritance, but never is the tribe of Levi alone so spoken of. God is said to be *their* inheritance, to compensate them for their lack of special territory in the land of Israel, but never are they said to be God's inheritance in any sense peculiar to themselves.

And divine inspiration so ordered it that this idea should receive its scriptural condemnation from that Apostle, who is claimed by Romanists as the apex of their Episcopal hierarchy. "The Elders which are among you," says the Apostle Peter, "I who am also an Elder, exhort that ye be ensamples to the flock, *not lording it over God's heritage.*" Here it is plain that it is the flock who are God's heritage (Clergy); so that the Clergy are the people and the people are the Clergy. But in direct opposition to the word of God the ministry of the Church claimed as their own prerogative that which was the privilege of all the people, and then in virtue of that prerogative proceeded to disobey the Apostle's express command, and to lord it over the people. Terms like these, which grow out of an idea, cannot be used without carrying with them some of the force of that idea; and it is painful to see how these two terms hang before the eyes of all who use them as a distorting medium to pervert their views of all passages that bear upon this question of Church government. Thus, as clear a minded man, and as unprejudiced and candid a man, as Bishop Lightfoot cannot rid himself of the hallucination of these terms in interpreting as plain a passage as that to which we referred last Sunday. "Let the Elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine." Here it is as plain as language can make it that two

classes of Elders are spoken of,—one consisting of Elders who only rule, and the other consisting of Elders who, in addition to ruling, labor in the word and doctrine. Yet Bishop Lightfoot says, “It is needless to remark that this passage affords no countenance to the Presbyterian idea of *lay Elders*.” Lay Elders! Of course not; it is too plain that no such chasm exists between the two classes of Elders spoken of in this passage as is implied in the historical usage of the terms Clergy and Laity; and it is equally clear that the Presbyterian Ruling Elder could never be described by the term *Clergy*, conveying as that term does, the idea of a priestly caste, separated from the affairs of common life. The true solution of the learned Bishop’s perplexity, (for he is able to give no other interpretation of the passage) is to discard these terms altogether. They are the language of Ashdod, and not the language of Israel. The same remarks apply to the office of Deacon. The idea of a priestly caste could never include a set of men with the duties of scriptural Deacons, and so those whose views are influenced by the use of a term that conveys that idea can find no place for such an officer in the organization of the Church. Placed too high in scripture to be considered a layman, and not priestly enough in his character to be a clergyman, he is left out altogether, and his name given to another officer, differing only from the minister of the word in an unscriptural

distinction between the sacraments. But we, who are not embarrassed in our interpretation of Scripture by the tyranny of history and tradition, affirm the office of the Deacon to be what our original interpretation of the passage in Acts determined it to be, and assign to the Deacon those duties with reference to a particular congregation that the Seven discharged for the whole Church at Jerusalem.

Having devoted so much time to the nature of the office of a Deacon, we may be more brief as to the other two points. Let us pass on now to our second inquiry, "what it is to use the office of a Deacon well." Of course we might conceive that one elected to this office might neglect its duties altogether, or might even be guilty of those corruptions that Origen speaks of as existing among the Deacons of his day; but it is needless to dwell upon this possibility, nor to remark that such a use of the office would not be using it well. Again, we might suppose that one might perform the duties of the office in a *perfunctory* manner, receiving what the Church gives, and disbursing it as directed, at the same time keeping an accurate account of the receipts and expenditures; this would be to use the office well only so far as it was a business matter, but the office would rise to no higher plane than that of a mere business trust. In such a discharge of the office a Deacon might see that no case of actual distress remained without relief,

so far as the fund at his disposal enabled him to relieve it. But in this his office would differ in no degree from that of a director of an almshouse. The Church's care of its poor extends farther than the relief of actual suffering; whatever can be done to mitigate the hard lines of their lot that tend to cramp them in their spiritual development; whatever can be done to teach them to help themselves and to enable them to take larger views of life and duty; whatever can be done to introduce into their lives any of those softening influences that refine and ennoble character; this it is the duty of the Church to do for its poor. And while much of this may be done by the voluntary or organized efforts of private Christians, the oversight of this matter devolves upon Deacons as part of their official duties. That Deacon uses his office well who by personal acquaintance with the poor learns their needs; and, by personal effort in their behalf, seeks to supply them in such a manner as shall not diminish their self-dependence, but shall encourage them to further efforts in their own behalf, by a sense of the appreciative interest of the Church in their welfare. Many a bright boy or girl might be made useful members of the Church and society, did the Church see that the necessities of poverty should not cut short their education just as their minds were beginning to develop. Many a youth could be made more useful to himself and

others, if the Church manifested a parental interest in his development, and sought for him those positions which would promote and not dwarf his growth and progress. Many a family might be educated into higher views of Christian duty if the Church supplied them with those religious periodicals that we regard as so beneficial to our own homes. Such things as these should be objects of consideration to those who would use the office of a Deacon well. But I can express this idea best by saying that he uses the office of a Deacon well who regards it, not as a mere secular office, but bears in mind the spiritual nature of its duties. It is true that the business of the office involves dealing in secular affairs; yet its duties are more than financial, and more than charitable. "The administration of this service (literally the deaconing of this service), not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God." Giving is not a mere human expedient, but a spiritual act of praise and thanksgiving unto God, and so not only accomplishes that object to which it is immediately directed, but overflows in many spiritual blessings to God's people, and ascends upward in many acts of thanksgiving and praise to the bountiful giver of all; and that Deacon uses his office best who bears in mind its spiritual import, who administers it as a spiritual trust, who discharges it with spiritual motives, who ever keeps

before him its spiritual ends and seeks to promote the spiritual grace of giving in the congregation which he serves.

And this brings us to our last consideration: What is that good degree which they purchase to themselves? We will not say with some that it is promotion to higher office in the Church. This, of course, may follow incidentally, but not necessarily; for one may be so eminently suited to this office, that it would be an injury to the Church to place him in any other; and we do not find that motives of human ambition are ever appealed to in the scriptures as a stimulus to duty, but as our Lord says: "Let him that is chief be as he that doth serve." No, that good degree that they purchase to themselves who use the office of a Deacon well is that attainment in grace, that advancement in spiritual life, that the discharge of their duties in the spirit I have described naturally tends to produce, together with that good record for faithful service to which such a discharge of their duties entitles them. One cannot devote himself to the good of others without himself deriving good. One cannot seek to promote the interest of the congregation that he serves in the missionary and evangelistic enterprises of the Church without having his own views of the Kingdom of Christ enlarged, and without consecrating himself more completely to its service. If the outgoing of the Church's energies is

necessary to the Church's growth; if the law of love is the essential law of the Church's life, surely those who are the willing channels of that energy and love must be partakers of that growth, and be strengthened in their own spiritual activities. If the administration of this service abounds in many thanksgivings to God, gives rise to many prayers to God, and is productive of many spiritual blessings to the people of God, surely those blessings, prayers and thanksgivings ought to be shared in large measure by those who administer this service. And he whose spiritual life is thus enriched, as he increases in love, will increase in faith. And so the Apostle himself defines this good degree as consisting in great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

I doubt not that in uttering these words the Apostle had in his mind that one of the seven Deacons of Jerusalem whose stoners laid their garments at his own feet. He thought of his boldness and intrepidity in argument—the irresistible power and wisdom with which he had spoken; he thought of his noble defence before the Council; he saw again that face which he could never forget as it had been the face of an angel; he thought of that position which he had gained among the noble army of martyrs, as the first to seal with his blood his faith in Jesus of Nazareth; he thought of that death so like his Lord's, as he died praying, "Lord lay not this sin to their charge;"

and with all the life and death of the martyr Stephen before his mind he exclaims, "They that have used the office of a Deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." The Apostle Paul seems never for a moment to have forgotten his part in the death of Stephen; Stephen's life and influence seems to survive in the life of his persecutor; and the Apostle seems always to have felt that he owed to Christ, not only all the service of his own life, but that also of the noble young life which he had helped to quench. And thus it was that though he felt himself to be the least of all the Apostles, and not meet to be called an Apostle because he persecuted the Church of God, he was more abundant in labors than they all. The spiritual possibilities of the Diaconate stretch out to the farthest horizon of Christian experience, when we contemplate the influence of the Deacon Stephen upon the Apostle Paul.

And now, in conclusion, let me say one word to the congregation concerning their part in this matter. We saw in the beginning that the appointment of the Seven grew out of the abundant spiritual activities of the Church in the time of its first love, when no man called aught that he had his own. And it is probable that the discontinuance of this office in its true scriptural uses grew out of the fact that the love of the Church had grown cold. Within the memory

of some of us it has been the case in Presbyterian churches, not that this office was perverted to other uses, but discontinued altogether, simply because there was no use for it. The benevolent energies of the Church were so dead that they needed no such channel to flow in. And if the office of Deacon be not discontinued, but secularized; if Deacons become mere Trustees of the Church's funds, the fault is not necessarily with the Deacons themselves, but with the congregation which they serve. If the true use of the Deacon's office is to serve as a channel for the benevolent energies of the Church, this use is necessarily discontinued when these energies are inactive. It has been remarked that the existence of such an office in the Church as that of Deacon is an indication of higher spiritual life in the Church than the existence of Ministers and Ruling Elders. Ministers and Rulers are necessary to the very existence of the Church, but Deacons are only necessary on account of the *love* of the Church, and its tender care to the poor and spiritually destitute. And a church will miss its true mission and become dwarfed in its spiritual life, that does not fulfil these duties. A church may rear large and elegant structures, may give large sums to be spent for its own comfort, may pay large salaries that it may enjoy beautiful music and eloquent preaching, but if it seek not to bring in the poor, to help the afflicted, to send the Gospel

to those in spiritual want, it is not fulfilling its mission; it possesses not the spirit of its Master, and worldliness and sin will corrupt its spiritual life. "The poor ye have ever with you" is not a mere prophecy, it is a promise; for ministry to the poor is essential to the development of the image of Christ within us. The church that neglects this ministry neglects its own life. It may seem rich and powerful and increased in goods, but it is really wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. It has no appreciation of the spirit of one of the early martyrs who, when his persecutors demanded the treasures of the church, brought forth the aged, the sick and helpless, and said, "These are our treasures." Such a church needs to pray that the Lord would anoint its eyes with eye-salve that it may see; that He would baptise it with His Holy Spirit that it may apprehend its true mission; and with its eye fixed upon that mission, and its energies going forth to fulfil it, its Deacons will necessarily be restored to their true position, and be stimulated to more spiritual views of the duties of their office. The Church whose spiritual energies are ever flowing in active work for the good of others, for the advancement of Christ's Kingdom, and the glory of His name, will always have Deacons who use their office well, and so purchase to themselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith, which is in Christ Jesus.



D02458518X

Duke University Libraries